



Department of Conservation and Recreation
Stewardship Council Meeting
March 2, 2007
West Boylston Office, MA

Meeting Minutes

Stewardship Councilors in Attendance: Councilors Whitney Hatch, Laura Johnson, Henry Lee, and John Natoli

Public Attendees: Carol Gilmour, Friends of Robinson State Park; Claudia Hurley, Friends of Robinson State Park; Mike Hurley; Dick Miller, Cochituate State Park Advisory Committee; Mike Ryan, Friends of the Fells; Heidi Ricci, Mass Audubon; Carole Ann Berkowitz, Protect Our Water Resources; Jeff Furber, Friends of Whitehall; Joe Feingol, Callahan Canine Owners Association; and Renata von Tscharna, Charles River Conservancy..

DCR Staff in Attendance: Acting Commissioner Priscilla Geigis, Jonathan Yeo, John Scannell, Scott Murphy, Marianne Fleckner, Lois Breault, Denis Melican, Patrice Kish, Nikki Belmonte and Joe Rotondo.

I. Call To Order (1:15 p.m.), Councilor Hatch

- a. Councilor Hatch announced that Councilor Ward will be resigning from the Council. Chairman Cross will be working with the Secretary's office on appointing others.
- b. The Conservation & Recreation campaign released a publication on the economic benefits of DCR parks and suggests the Council should use it to advocate for DCR.

II. Commissioner's Report, Acting Commissioner Priscilla Geigis

- a. The Valentine's Day snow storm response was a success. .
- b. The first statewide Supervisor's Academy will be Apr. 2-4. This will be an annual event focusing on a different recreational theme every year. This year Waterfront Safety and Operations is the focus theme.
- c. OHV interest groups are being provided with a written update by mail and email as well as posted on the DCR website. Currently applying to props where it is legal. Decisions will be made before May 1 riding season. EOEEA, F&G, law enforcement.
- d. The House 1 budget was announced. The Joint Ways and Means Committees are holding a hearing on Mar. 9 in Winthrop on transportation and housing issues, but are not accepting public testimony. Written testimony can be submitted at a second hearing scheduled for Mar. 15 at the State House.
- e. DCR will hold its first Park Stewards conference at Elm Bank in Wellesley on Mar. 10. This is the first friends and partners conference conducted at DCR. There will be several DCR overview presentations, a Q&A, round table and skill building courses.
- f. Ron Cameron, Deputy Commissioner of Operations, has moved on from DCR to pursue other opportunities. Jonathan Yeo, Director of Water Supply Protection is serving as the Acting Deputy Commissioner, and John Scannell is filling in as Acting Director.
- g. DCR welcomed two new External Affairs staff. Wendy Fox from the Boston Globe has joined DCR as the new press secretary and Anne Roach from the government relations office in the City of Somerville has taken on the position of legislative liaison for DCR
- h. March is maple sugaring time and DCR is offering several programs at Brookwood Farm, Breakheart Reservation, D.A.R. State Forest and Blackstone River Heritage State Park. Additional information can be found on website.

III. Committee Updates and Meeting Schedules

a. Finance Committee, Whitney Hatch

- i. The House 1 figure (\$89.5M) is only an 8/10ths of an increase compared to FY07. Earmarks such as urban rink leases and the zoos in the FY07 budget have been taken out (\$8.8M). This raised the available budget by \$5.6M with \$3.6M expansion and new investments: \$1.5M in Urban Parks to add contractor capacity, uniforms, signage, equipment and hires; \$1.3M for Urban operations, and \$1M in State Parks deferred maintenance, utilities and signage. Accounts have been consolidated in park operations (state, urban, CA/T, State House Rangers), seasonal staffing, parkways (snow and ice and street lighting), and retained revenue accounts (22 appropriations decreased to 12). The Finance committee will decide how to interpret this and draft up a letter for Council's consideration.

Councilor Lee questioned the legislature's support of consolidation and removal of earmarks.

Councilor Johnson highlighted that while the overall House 1 increased by 4%, environmental agencies only increased 2.4%.

b. Resource Management Plan Committee, Henry Lee

- i. Due to lack of staffing, only one pilot project and the guidelines will be presented to the Council this spring. Another RMP planner may approved for hire.

c. Policy Committee, Laura Johnson

- i. The committee focused on the historic parkway policy which received much public comment focused on section 3 of the policy that provides for a way for exceptions. The main question is whether the Commissioner should make a ruling on exceptions and report to the Council or the Council should approve exceptions itself. After a discussion with DCR, the policy has been refocused on the public participation component.

IV. Historic Parkway Policy Update & Discussion, Patrice Kish

- a. DCR received over 100 comment letters during the public review period from Dec – Jan. The letters fell into three categories: (1) the need for clarifications on the annual spring inspections, timelines, and how the Council weighs in; (2) semantics (s/a highway standards), and; (3) issues explicitly described in the guidelines but not in the policy.
- b. The guidelines lay out a clear process for public participation; public comment is sought during four times during the planning process. DCR proposes to restate section 3:

Public participation is essential to DCR's implementation of the Guidelines. The public participation strategy for a historic parkway project shall include the broadest ranges of stakeholders and shall encourage the public's involvement as early in the process as possible. The public participation plan shall be customized based on the specific project undertaking and shall focus on the following benchmarks: Project Visioning; Presentation of Alternatives; Presentation of Preferred Design, and; Pre-construction. In instances where the agency is unable to meet the intent of a specific treatment guideline, DCR's public participation plan shall incorporate an appropriate amount of outreach to ensure adequate public review and comment on the deviation from the treatment guideline.

Councilor Lee felt the language could be seen as arbitrary. Councilor Natoli suggested framing the policy around a design and control process so that exceptions can be measured against a standard. Councilor Johnson recognized that there is a trust issue embedded in this debate.

Ms. Kish will revise the policy to fully explain the public outreach process to help define a minimum level of communication and post it for a 2-week comment period which will close and results analyzed for the April meeting. Councilor Hatch asked the policy subcommittee to bring a recommendation for Council.

V. **Postcards from the Parks: Wachusett Reservoir, John Scannell**

- a. Mr. Scannell gave a presentation on the 108 sq. mile watershed located in central MA.
- b. Drinking water from Quabbin Reservoir flows into Wachusett and then to the water supply for Boston. Annual work plans on a \$13M budget are developed based on the watershed protection plan revised every 5 years.
- c. 70 full time employees work in water quality monitoring, land acquisition, maintenance, security patrols, wildlife control, forestry and invasive species control.

VI. **Approval of Minutes from 02/02/07 Meeting** – *No quorum, tabled until April*

Councilor Lee pointed out that the 6-month time period for completion of enforcement and funding plan be added to the minutes.

VII. **Meeting Schedule** – *Next meeting will be moved to Friday, April 13 at Community Boating, Boston.*

VIII. **Public Comment**

- a. **Claudia Hurley** of the Friends of Robinson State Park submitted public comments on Public Outreach and Consultation for Forest Cutting Plans Policy. In summary, Ms. Hurley did not feel that the policy is strong enough. She also described issues she has encountered with DCR including the inability to get a full explanation of tree markings, inappropriate comments and denial to submit inventory information collected by an expert. Councilor Hatch asked Acting Commissioner Geigis to report back to the Council.
- b. **Carol Gilmore** of the Friends of Robinson State Park stated that the information sent to letters to abutters of Robinson was misleading. She also state that aesthetics of the park may negatively affect the aesthetics and attraction of the park.
- c. **Dick Miller** of the Cochituate State Park Advisory Council reported that the floating circulators in Lake Cochituate are still set in ice and not gathering winter data that may be useful. Mr. Miller also alerted the Council to a private developer in South Natick who wants to install turbines based on riparian rights from the 1700s for a mill that does not need power.
- d. **Heidi Ricci** of Mass Audubon stated that the Public Outreach and Consultation for Forest Cutting Plans Policy needs to address how resource management plans and forest management plans fit in. She also noted that the policy does not clearly state the role of the bureau of Forestry within a public framework. There is a need for comprehensive plans that include recreation and public participation plans before cutting occurs. Ms. Ricci cited the Water Supply Protection management plans as a model, but acknowledged the difference in funding source from the rest of DCR. Out of the 2,350 acres sold or in the process of being sold, only one plot has a management plan.
- e. **Renata von Tscharna** of the Charles River Conservancy asked DCR to present a Postcard from the Parks on the new 40 acres of new parkland at the New Basin on the Charles River. She highlighted that a pedestrian bridge originally in the design to connect the park from one bank to the other will not be built due to lack of funding from the Mass Turnpike Authority.

Meeting adjourned 3:35 pm